



## Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Job Description

**Title:** Midewin Trail Steward

**Purpose:** Trail stewards assist the U.S. Forest Service staff at Midewin in establishing and maintaining a multi-use trail system intended to enhance the enjoyment and safety of trail users.

**Duties and Responsibilities:** Trail stewards are encouraged to walk their trail segment, at minimum, once a month to monitor safety conditions, especially April-October. Other responsibilities may include the following:

- Complete species list along trail segment
- Document trail conditions (safety hazards and erosion problems, new invaders)
- Report and/or repair signage and structure conditions
- Report unauthorized trails and trail misuse
- Check parking area for hazards or vandalism
- Remove small, detached branches from trail
- Report large overhangs or trees across trail
- Clear litter and properly dispose of garbage.
- Removal of debris blocking water drainage
- Remove/control invasive vegetation
- Install and/or maintain benches or trail amenities
- Greet visitors provide trail etiquette
- Wear blaze orange vest at all times provided by Midewin.
- Responsible for tracking volunteer hours

**Department and Location:** Under the direction of the Recreation Technician and/or Landscape Architect, stewards may have several jobs within Midewin's Public Services Team. The primary work locations start at the Iron Bridge, River Road or Explosives Road Trailheads. Trainings and meetings take place at the Welcome Center.

**Qualifications:** Stewards are responsible for their own transportation to trailheads. Trail segments are 1-2 miles long. Previous experience with nature trails and plant identification are very helpful. Some information is most efficiently reported online, so internet access and email is required. Stewards will come in contact with many visitors so interpretation of Midewin's history, mission, challenges and accomplishments is important. This type of work is often easier and safer with a partner, so this should be highly considered (especially for stewards without a cell phone).

**Time Commitment:** Midewin asks that stewards commit to a minimum of a year and visit their site once a month or more. Trail stewards are able to work on their trails any day of the year from one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset.

**Training:** All stewards are required to complete the in-house orientation to tools, reporting, herbicide handling and trail specifics. Staff is available to walk trails with stewards as an initial orientation and then in certain cases throughout the year. New stewards may shadow seasoned stewards until they are comfortable taking on a segment of their own. Stewards are encouraged to acquire their herbicide license through the Illinois Dept of Agriculture. At minimum, annual meetings are held to discuss comments, concerns and ideas as a whole group. First Aid and CPR is encouraged, but not required. Midewin trail rules must be followed.

**Working Conditions/Physical Effort:** Safety gear, equipment, tools, and materials will be provided by Midewin. *Stewards are covered by their signed Volunteer Agreement (Form 301a) only while working on their assigned trail segment or with another trail steward during open trail hours (every day of the year from one hour before sunrise till one hour after sunset).* Stewards may work in variable conditions including:

- Exposure to outdoor weather conditions & allergens
- Walking on uneven ground for a distance of 1-2 miles
- Stewards may choose to work on their trail wearing blaze orange during fall and spring hunting season.
- Carrying and using a variety of hand tools and possibly some small power tools
- Handling herbicide

**Benefits:** Stewards will feel ownership in Midewin natural areas and trails and improve recreational opportunities for visitors. Working outside is a great workout and very therapeutic. Midewin's volunteer staff receives ongoing recognition from their supervisor and other staff. Volunteers that contribute 6 or more hours are invited to an annual volunteer recognition banquet in November. Midewin's volunteer staff receives the bimonthly Prairie Telegraph. Volunteers may be featured in the telegraph, newspaper articles and/or US Forest Service success stories. Awards can be received for outstanding, innovative and/or long term, core volunteers.

**Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator about this opportunity.**